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Art. II.—*Cousin's Philosophy.*

*Cours de Philosophie.* PAR M. V. COUSIN, Professeur de Philosophie à la Faculté des Lettres de Paris. *Introduction à l'Histoire de la Philosophie.* Paris. 1828.

We propose to offer in the present article a sketch of the philosophy of Victor Cousin, one of the most distinguished metaphysicians of the day, and to inquire what he has done for the advancement of intellectual science. Has he merely affixed his name to another of those ingenious fictions, called systems of philosophy, which will reign for a season and then be supplanted? Does he only present us the ideas of his predecessors newly arranged? Or, has he added to them something of his own, which essentially helps the cause? His genius, alike brilliant and profound, has given an attraction to the subject of metaphysics, altogether unprecedented in the annals of philosophy. Since the year 1828,—when he returned to the professorial chair, after a long absence,—his lectures have been attended by crowds not merely of the learning, but the fashion of Paris. We cannot expect in a brief outline of these lectures, to impart an idea of the beauty and eloquence of their style; for this we must refer the reader to the work itself, which will well reward perusal. Those who do not adopt the system of Cousin, or are not prepared to admit with him, that intellectual philosophy is the culminating point, '*le dernier mot*' of humanity, cannot fail to admire the profoundness of his views, the extent of his learning, his fearless but catholic spirit, his reverence for religion and his just respect for humanity. From a profound analysis of the human mind he has elaborated the thread, which is to conduct him through the labyrinth of systems and schools; while his soaring genius, rising above all the particulars of periods or sects, comprehends in its splendid generalization, not the actual merely, but the possible, and embraces in one vast idea, God, man and the universe.

Although the philosophy of mind is so unsettled, yet it is generally admitted that the mission of the philosopher is to describe and arrange what in some form or other is already known, and to elicit the truth from the various disguises and fallacies by which it is concealed. This eclectic principle is adopted by Cousin as the essential character of his philosophy. He attaches himself to no school, he invokes not the genius of any one great mind,

but the genius of philosophy alone. It is with him a fundamental maxim, that every system which has been believed must contain some truth, that the mind of man is so constituted, that it never assents to any proposition wholly destitute of truth. That a small portion of truth has given currency to monstrous errors is a fact, which, far from rendering us skeptical as to the reality of truth, only illustrates its value.

‘Ce que j’enseigne, ce n’est pas telle ou telle philosophie, mais la philosophie elle-même, ce n’est pas l’attachement à tel ou tel système, si grand qu’il puisse être, l’admiration de tel ou tel homme, quelqu’ait été son génie, mais l’esprit philosophique, supérieur à tous les systèmes et à tous les philosophes, c’est à dire l’amour sans bornes, de la vérité ou qu’elle se rencontre, l’intelligence de tous les systèmes qui prétendent la posséder tout entière, et qui en possèdent au moins quelque chose, et le respect de tous les hommes qui l’ont cherchée et qui la cherchent encore avec talent et loyauté. La vraie muse de l’historien de la philosophie n’est pas la haine, mais l’amour; et la mission de la critique n’est pas seulement de signaler les extravagances très réelles et très nombreuses des systèmes philosophiques, mais de démêler et de dégager du milieu de ces erreurs, les vérités qui peuvent et qui doivent y être mêlées, et par là, de révéler la raison humaine à ses propres yeux, d’absoudre la philosophie dans le passé, de l’enhardir et de l’éclairer dans l’avenir.’

Cousin’s plan embraces the whole history of philosophy in every age and nation, its leading minds and various systems. No one system, he says, can be fully comprehended without an acquaintance with all the consequences which may be fairly charged upon it, the causes which influenced its development, and a view of its relation to the period to which it belongs. In conformity with this eclectic principle, an account of every system is the broad base on which only should be raised the structure of intellectual science. He assumes, that all the problems which the human mind can propose to itself have been successively advanced, and that the various modes by which they have been solved, or attempted to be solved, have given birth to numerous philosophical theories, which may all be referred to two schools, the sensual and the ideal. To the first belong those systems which derive all our knowledge from the senses, to the second those which derive it from the intellect. To these he afterwards added two others, the skeptical and the mystical,—they are the extremes, to which the two original systems tend, and at which

they always arrive. Each system which has prevailed, owes its temporary success to the truth contained in it, but being founded on a partial view of the mental phenomena,—although offered as complete,—it fails to explain the whole, and thus generates doubt, and at last skepticism. But the mind cannot remain in a state of unbelief. Distrusting its reasoning powers, whose insufficiency it has experienced, it takes refuge in faith and is carried to the extreme of mysticism. As each of these schools has been adopted, they must all contain some truth ; but truth is one, and as there have been four schools, neither contained the whole truth, but each, with the element of truth which secured its adoption, involved some element of error. These four divisions comprehend the whole field of intellectual philosophy, and are the foundation of the arrangement, under which our author treats its history. The lectures delivered in the year 1829, commence with a preliminary sketch of ancient philosophy, and then proceed to the history of the sensual school of the eighteenth century. Those of the preceding year are occupied with an analysis of the understanding, with a view to ascertain the laws which regulate its operations.

The history of philosophy is the history of human reason, and therefore supplies the materials and the tests of intellectual science. The individual examination of mind affords, however, the most certain knowledge ; there we have actual experience of the phenomena in question. But the internal vision is liable to be disturbed and obscured by the false media through which we look, and even by the nearness and familiarity of the objects ; both methods are therefore adopted by Cousin, and he believes that the results of his internal investigation are every where confirmed by the testimony of history.

At the commencement of his course, he undertakes to prove that philosophy is an essential element in our nature, that its history is not a mere record of arbitrary imaginations and chimeras, but a necessary result of a real demand of the mind ; not the reveries of a few men of genius, propagated and maintained by their authority, but a legitimate offspring of the human constitution. The various modes in which men are found to act are by him referred to five different heads ; utility or industry, justice, art, religion and philosophy. As soon as man appears upon the earth, he finds that without a knowledge and control of the laws of the natural world, his frail existence cannot be secured for a moment. He observes the properties of the

objects around him, and models them to his use. The earth is originally only a basis, the matter for the labors of man ; its present value and perfection are the result of his labors, and are nothing less than the creation of a new world. Such are the effects of science and industry. Besides those actions which have the character of being useful or hurtful, we observe others which are just or unjust. Justice is the basis of civil or political society. This does not regard the whole of human nature, but confines itself to outward actions ; and does not so much protect as regulate liberty. Individually considered, men are not equal ; one surpasses another in talents and strength ; but civil society, when it places all on the same footing before the law, establishes, thus far, a perfect equality.

*‘L’idée du juste est une des gloires de la nature humaine, l’homme l’aperçoit d’abord, mais il ne l’aperçoit que comme un éclair dans la nuit profonde des passions primitives ; il la voit sans cesse violée, et à tout moment effacée par le desordre nécessaire des passions et des intérêts contraires.’*

The sentiment of the beautiful is naturally called forth by its appropriate objects. The mind perceives and welcomes the beauty diffused over every thing around us, disengages it from the imperfection in which it is immersed, and forms to itself an ideal beauty, surpassing any in the external world.

*‘La beauté de l’art est supérieure à la beauté naturelle, de toute la supériorité de l’homme sur la nature.’*

But this world,—says our author,—so metamorphosed and remodelled by man, is not sufficient for him. His thoughts spring far beyond it,—powerful as he is, he yet conceives a higher power,—he perceives Deity. Worship is the developement, the realization of the sentiment of religion, and accomplishes its purpose by presenting the idea under some symbol or external form. But the mind cannot rest satisfied with symbols ; it seeks, by analysis and examination, to comprehend the Deity contained in them. Thus reflection succeeds to faith. ‘The first moment in which man reflects gives birth to philosophy.’

Philosophy includes the highest class of our intellectual operations. It presents in the form of general propositions, the results of the operations of the several distinct principles of utility, justice, beauty and religion.

*‘La philosophie ne coupe point à l’art ses ailes divines, mais elle le suit, dans son vol, mesure sa portée et son but.’*

These views, if correct, should be confirmed by history, for human nature is manifested in the species, which exhibits the same elements as the individual, on a larger scale ; and accordingly Cousin finds, after taking a survey of the whole course of history, that the philosophic element is more or less developed in every period.

In the East, philosophy appeared with the traits of infancy and enveloped in religion ; passing thence into Greece, it gradually threw off the weight of authority and came forth from the hands of Socrates in its proper shape, as the spirit of inquiry, examination and reflection. In the middle ages, it was again brought under subjection. The characteristic of the scholastic philosophy was to keep within a circle, not marked out by itself, but imposed by ecclesiastical authority. That of the present age is the free use of reason, and the emancipation is now complete. The philosophic spirit, once introduced into the world, cannot be checked ; the proportion of philosophers, viz. of those who reflect, increases with every age, and although philosophy is still in its infancy, we may look forward with confidence to its maturity. This, if not favorable to presumption, at least is so to hope.

‘ Car tout ce qu’on n’a pas derrière soi, on l’a devant soi, et il vaut mieux avoir de l’avenir que du passé.’

Having shown, that the philosophic element is a part, and the highest part of human nature, the author thence infers, that it will so appear in history, which is the image of human nature ; for the history of philosophy is the history of the understanding, considered under all the circumstances in which it can be called to act. This history is both special and general ; special, because it treats of only one part of our nature, the intellectual ; and general, inasmuch as this part includes a variety of distinct faculties or forms, under which it operates.

As the history of philosophy is a special examination of our intellectual part, Cousin regards it as a necessary preliminary, to ascertain the elements of which this is composed. The understanding, like the other faculties, is developed before it is observed and examined. When it began to be reflected on, then philosophy began. It has been the object of all those philosophers who have left any trace in history, to give an account of the understanding, its nature, laws and rights ; but a rigorous and scientific analysis of it has been only twice attempted ; first by

Aristotle, and next by Kant. Cousin does not admit, that either of these philosophers has arrived at a perfect analysis; that they have discovered all the elements of the intellect, or all the relations between them.

‘C’est quand nous aurons ces élémens, quand nous les aurons réduit, quand nous aurons saisi tous leurs rapports, que nous serons en possession des fondemens de la raison et de son histoire.’

Cousin therefore analyzes the mind anew. He begins by assuming what he thinks no one will deny, that human reason, whether applied to internal or external things, conceives under two ideas, which are the ultimate elements of thought,—unity and multiplicity. These two ideas have been recognized in all systems, and expressed by several terms, such as the necessary and the contingent, the absolute and the relative, the infinite and the finite, substance and phenomenon. A just analysis, in Cousin’s opinion, identifies all the first and also all the second of these terms and reduces them to two, as vast as reason or even as the possible; viz. unity and multiplicity, or plurality. These arise in the mind simultaneously, or if multiplicity succeed unity, the succession is scarcely perceptible. Unity cannot act without generating plurality, viz. variety, and variety cannot be produced except by unity. The two are connected by the relation of cause, which relation is as necessary as the elements themselves;—from their existence, results all reality and life. These two terms, unity and plurality, express the ultimate points of Cousin’s analysis, and together with the relation of cause, by which they are necessarily united, constitute,—to use his own words,—a triplicity which resolves itself into unity. This unity is intelligence or mind. It is,—says he,—the vice of both ancient and modern systems, that they separate unity from plurality, the infinite from the finite, so that the passage from the one to the other is impossible. But the absolute and the infinite must result in the relative and the finite, because the first is a cause and this relation is of its essence.

The union of the infinite with the finite by the relation of cause is the distinguishing trait of our author’s theory, the bridge by which he crosses the hitherto impassable gulph.

Arrived at this sublime point, he adds, we have lost sight of earth; we can discern nothing but these three abstractions, unity, multiplicity and cause, which are the integral elements of human

reason, and also of the Divine intelligence. He proceeds to examine more at large the nature of these abstractions. Human reason is impersonal, that is, independent of our will. We can act or refrain from acting, but we cannot change a mathematical conception, we cannot make equality difference, or virtue vice; therefore personality consists in the will. Reason is absolute, universal, divine. Human reason is imperfect, because it is enveloped in a finite nature; but still it is a fragment of the pure incorruptible intellect,—the absolute reason, whose essence is always the same.

Ideas are not the products of intelligence, but intelligence itself; we cannot call them ours; they are not so much conceptions of human reason, as of that absolute reason of which ours is a part. They are only lent as it were to human reason, and their existence there is wholly intellectual. The condition of intelligence is not merely that it exist in the mind, but that it be developed, that is, we must be conscious of it, for intelligence without consciousness is merely the abstract possibility of intelligence. Now consciousness implies difference; thus unity, which is intelligence, necessarily results in variety; and that this is through the relation of cause, Cousin undertakes to shew, by a further examination.

In perceiving ourselves, we necessarily perceive something not ourselves, by which we are limited and controlled; this gives us the idea of the finite, that is, the limited; but the finite cannot arise in the mind without the idea of the infinite. The infinite is known only by its acts, hence we get the idea of cause. It is not in the power of man to destroy these three ideas, which are the foundation of all his consciousness. They are not an arbitrary production of human reason; they constitute that reason and what is true of that, is true also of absolute reason, a part of which it is. This absolute reason being of necessity a cause, must of necessity create; thus we are conducted from God to the universe, by creation.

The common idea of creation is, that something is made out of nothing. But the philosophers tell us, that nothing can come of nothing; whence it follows that creation is impossible, and since the world does actually exist, as it could not be created, it must be self-existent. Thus we have two self-existent principles.

But if we examine this idea of nothing, we shall find it to be a mere hypothesis, without proof. To create, is a thing not



difficult to conceive, for we create every time we will, we produce an effect which we ascribe to none other than ourselves. The act begins by virtue of the principle of causation, which exists in us, and is essential to mind. To cause, then,—according to Cousin,—is not to create out of nothing, but to exercise any inherent power. God creates from the power inherent in his nature ; as He is absolute, to create in Him is necessary, and the difference between the creative power in man and God is, the general difference of an absolute and relative cause. In man, the creative power cannot pass the limit of his own mind, and is besides controlled by accidents without and within. Still it is creative power, and so far a type of divine creation.

The principle of causation is not exhausted by its effects, but retains all its potency and nature. The creation of the universe, though necessary, and a manifestation of God, does not exhaust the Deity, as when *we* will, it does not exhaust the power of willing.

The harmony of the universe proves the unity of God ; but harmony is not unity, for it supposes variety. The whole world reflects God, that is, the elements of his divine essence, unity and variety ; these pass into the world, and return thence to the consciousness of man ; that is, are perceived and comprehended by him.

Thus, setting out from human nature, we ascend to God. Since mind is of one essence, it must in man be a portion of the Divinity. From God, who is of necessity a cause, we proceed to the world he has created. From creation we are brought back to humanity, as that which comprehends it and is the 'résumé' of all nature. In each we find the three ideas, unity, multiplicity and cause, which are the foundation of all things. The result,—at which the philosopher arrives on completing this circle of existence, human and divine,—is this grand truth, that history, which is the image of humanity, may be resolved into the same elements ; whence it follows that there can be but three grand epochs in history, each of which is characterized by the prevalence of one of these elements over the other, and the degree in which one modifies the other.

Cousin further considers the development of reason as two-fold,—spontaneous and reflective. The nature of universal truths, or rather of that power which recognizes them, is a point which has puzzled the metaphysical world not less than the passage from the infinite to the finite. That they are recognized

by the human mind is a fact which no one denies, but the philosophers wish to account for it, and in this they have not yet succeeded to their own satisfaction. Kant calls these elements of reason, subjective laws, that is, laws of the human mind ; but if they are subjective, or personal, we cannot,—says Cousin,—transport them out of ourselves ; and according to this theory, although the external world may be to us an invincible belief, it cannot be a separate existence ; and the same may be said of God. Cousin's explanation of this problem is the distinction of reason, as spontaneous and reflective. Spontaneity, according to him, is the power which reason has to seize truth at a grasp ; to comprehend and admit it without explanation. These truths are not personal, they do not belong to this or that mind, but they are universal,—of the essence of all mind. This involuntary perception of truth is, he says, accompanied with enthusiasm, and man ascribes it to God ; it is, in fact, a real revelation. It has been called inspiration, and is in all languages distinguished from reflection. This spontaneous reason, by the aid of analysis, that is, by a process of reflection, engenders those elements of human reason, which philosophers call categories. *Reflection* does not *give*, it only *explains* these, for these laws are universal, and reflection is personal. It must be acknowledged that reason operates in both these ways, and the only objection to the explanation from Cousin is, that almost in the same breath in which he describes reason as twofold, that is, spontaneous and reflective or liable to err, he affirms that it is impersonal, absolute and incapable of error. Nothing, he says, can be more impersonal than reason, and these universal truths are a part of, or constitute it. But if reason be defined to mean the power of apprehending universal truth, it cannot be used to express the whole development of mind.

His explanation does not differ essentially from that of Fichte, who also ascribes to the human mind a twofold nature, the absolute and the phenomenal. The root of the difficulty appears to us to lie in the identification of reason with universal truth. The perception of this truth does not necessarily impose universality on the percipient, neither does the fact that the percipient is finite, limit these truths to its own finite nature. It is an undoubted power of the human mind to attain more or less perfectly, to knowledge of something beyond itself. Though not secured from error, it can yet arrive at the conception of truth, and with all its frailty, recognize and adore perfection, and thus,

while bearing the marks of a created, and consequently a finite nature, it proves the Creator divine. Although we do not object to the terms spontaneity and reflection as designating two operations of human reason so different, as the perception of absolute and relative truth; yet this explanation does not solve the metaphysical problem,—in our opinion a mere chimera,—of the transportation of the laws of the human mind into the universe; or show satisfactorily, how the absolute and the impersonal can be, at the same time, the relative and personal, though we can readily admit, because experience proves it, that the human mind is so constituted, as to take in both these classes of ideas.

But to return to our author. The human mind, he says, contains in a latent state those divine rays, which reflection afterwards develops. These are the truths of spontaneity, and are the same to all. The vast variety and differences of mankind,—which are not to be denied, but explained,—arise from *reflection*. Spontaneity is uniform, but reflection is an element of difference. The condition of reflection is time, that is, succession. As reflection can only consider the elements of thought successively, it may take one to be the whole. This is the source of all error. But error can never be complete; reflection in its most extravagant wanderings may always be brought back, for it must have hold of some truth. Error does not consist in false, but in incomplete ideas; and every conception,—according to this system,—is true, excepting so far as it is taken for the whole truth.

‘Nous sommes toujours dans le vrai, et en même tems nous sommes presque toujours dans le faux lorsque nous réfléchissons, parce que nous sommes presque toujours dans l’incomplet, et que l’incomplet est nécessairement de la variété encore et déjà de l’erreur.’

If we apply the test of history to this principle, we shall find that it discloses the same unity and difference on a larger scale. The elements of human nature are developed successively; error is fugitive, while truth is universal and enduring.

With regard to the order of their development, Cousin says, that in the human mind, the elements appear at first confusedly, till reflection examines and separates them. The finite is always in the mind, for our first perception is of ourselves; but this idea, too weak at its commencement to absorb the others, is absorbed by the infinite, which being developed, its chance

of predominance is great. The obscurity which accompanies it adds to its power. Man loses himself in the contemplation of this infinite, which he knows he has not made.

‘Le moi dans sa faiblesse, ne pouvant pas s’attribuer ces caracteres majestueux et terribles s’anéantit dans cette intuition formidable : l’humanité s’éclipse à ses propres yeux, en presence de l’être qui seul est en possession de l’unité; de l’infinité, de la toute puissance, de l’éternité, de l’existence absolue.’

Man cannot begin by realizing that reason in him is but a part of this divine essence, but at length he feels his importance ; the ravishing sentiment of power eclipses every other. Then comes the epoch of personality, of the finite. This will be an age of movement, of physical science, enterprise, liberty. When these two epochs have had their full course in every sphere, the third,—the perception of their relation, arrives. From this will result a more enlarged development, a more rational state of things.

This necessary order of succession conceals,—in Cousin’s opinion,—an order more profound ; the order of generation, for each epoch is modified by, and is the result of, the preceding. Thus the eternal elements of all things are found in history, which, according to this philosophy, is not merely a compendium of human nature, but of the universe.

‘Que dis-je ! l’histoire ne réfléchit pas seulement tout le mouvement de l’humanité, mais comme l’humanité est le résumé de l’univers, lequel est une manifestation de Dieu, il suit qu’en dernière analyse l’histoire n’est pas moins que le dernier contre-coup de l’action divine.—L’ordre admirable qui y regne, est un reflet de l’ordre éternel ; la nécessité de ses lois a pour dernier principe Dieu lui-même, Dieu considéré dans ses rapports avec le monde, et particulièrement avec l’humanité qui est le dernier mot du monde.

‘Si l’histoire est le gouvernement de Dieu, rendu visible, tout est à sa place dans l’histoire ; et si tout y est à sa place tout y est bien, car tout mene au but marqué, par une puissance bien-faisante.

‘L’histoire ainsi conçu dans cette harmonie universelle est donc éminemment belle ; elle est une poesie admirable, le drame ou l’épopée du genre humain.’

Regarded thus as a whole, the result of the necessary operation of wise and beneficent laws, ordained by an infinitely

perfect Being, history is not only beautiful and philosophical, but highly moral. We can conceive of Deity as being in his nature absolute and without any relation to this world, but such is not the God of humanity,—such is not the God revealed to us in the benevolence, the harmony, the justice of the universe. For, if there be a Providence apparent throughout all history, it must be by his regular laws. If nothing can exist except on the condition of its relation to God, every thing has its reason, and nothing is insignificant. The world of ideas is hid in the world of facts, and it is the mission of the philosopher to disengage and distinguish these ideas, to connect each fact, even the most particular, with some general law. The grand principle on which he must proceed, according to Cousin, is, that every place represents necessarily an idea, of consequence one of the three ideas into which all others may be resolved. This is the first rule of history, and, applied to the grand manifestations of each period, admits of three divisions, the place, the people, and individuals, or great men. Climate and country must be allowed to have an influence in determining the character of a people, unless we can believe that he who is consumed by the heat of the torrid zone, is called to the same destiny as he who inhabits the frozen deserts of Siberia. A vast continent, surrounded by the impassable ocean, divided by immense mountains, like Asia, is the place where we must look for the prevalence of the infinite; and here, in the commencement of history, we find the first epoch. The finite is an age of personality, it is developed in a land abounding in rivers, seas and facilities for inter-communication. The third requires a large continent in the temperate zone, possessing navigable waters and varied productions. This epoch is recent, and has scarcely passed its barbarous period. Although each epoch is marked by the prevalence of one idea, yet this does not exist alone, otherwise it would be a mere abstraction; other elements appear in a greater or less degree; hence the necessity of considering apart the several peoples comprehended in any one epoch, each of which exhibits some modification of the leading idea. Every nation has its own place and connexions in the grand system of humanity,—owes its character to the ages that preceded it, and bequeathes one to those which come after. The prevailing idea must pass through each of the spheres, industry, law, art, religion, and philosophy, before it has completed its work. Philosophy is the most important, and that which explains all the rest. The

history of philosophy, says Cousin, affords the light by which alone we can know and comprehend all other histories. While its generalisation contains not merely the most important truths, but all that can strictly be called truth.

‘C’est la vérité abstraite qui fonde et legitime la vérité qui se rencontre dans le concret.

‘Toute lumière comme toute vérité est dans l’abstraction, c’est-à-dire dans la reflexion, c’est-à-dire dans la philosophie.’

Thus we have only to consider the philosophy of each people in any given epoch, and raise it to its highest generalisation, to obtain the idea of this epoch.

This particular idea is always taken by each people for the whole. One truth appears after another, till at length all the elements of thought arrive at their complete development. Thus there is a continual struggle of opinions, for when one idea or people has performed its part in the great drama of humanity, it must yield to the next, and this cannot take place without a struggle. War therefore is, in the opinion of our author, inevitable, but is not to be regarded as an evil ; since it conduces to that succession of ideas, which is the completion of human nature. Each people will conquer, will endure for a time, and having fulfilled its destiny, pass away and give place to the next ; but humanity is superior to all epochs, outlives all, is perfected by all. Although each people, collectively considered, represents,—as Cousin expresses it,—an idea, that is, has a prevailing character, yet nations are made up of individuals, and some of these express more, others less, the general spirit of their age. Those who represent it most completely are its great men. They add to the general character their own individuality, which gives it life and reality. As they are the most perfect expression of the idea of their age, history treats only of them, and through them, represents the whole epoch. They are not only the expression but the result of their age, formed by it, as well as identified with it, and being the expression of humanity, which is the compendium of the universe,—to know them, is to know every thing. After great men,—says he,—there is nothing more to seek.

‘Ainsi la nature représente Dieu, et comme la nature avec toutes ses lois se résume dans l’humanité, et que l’humanité avec toutes ses époques, se résume dans les grands hommes, il en résulte, avec une rigueur qui ne laisse rien à contester, que l’ordre des

choses ou plutôt le mouvement perpétuel des choses, n'est dans tous ses momens et dans tous ses degrés, que l'enfantement des grands hommes.'

This idea, that great men bear the stamp, and afford the truest specimen of their age, is both beautiful and just.

When formed, the great man is the instrument of a power not his own,—the idea of his time. When the moment for its appearance arrives, he comes, and remains only so long as he is needed. Cousin admits that this savors of fatalism, but,—he says,—great men have ever been fatalists, have regarded themselves as the instruments of destiny, as irresistible; and hence their success. The result of success is power, and men, when they have obtained power, often abuse it, but they would not hold it a moment were it not for sympathy with their age; hence the devotion paid to the great man. Mankind identify him with themselves, and have an irresistible conviction that he *is* the people, the epoch. The glory which crowns him is his due, for glory is the appropriate reward of great results.

'La gloire est le cri de la sympathie et de la reconnoissance, c'est la dette de l'humanité envers le génie, c'est le prix des services qu'elle lui paye avec ce qu'elle a de plus précieux, son estime.'

As their success commands our admiration, so does their fall excite our compassion; but we must remember that humanity always prevails, and although we give a sigh to the noble vanquished, we would not change their destiny, for that would be to retard the progress of humanity. It is the same with the philosopher and his systems. In the combats of philosophy, we find matter not of regret but encouragement; they indicate that humanity is preparing to take a new step, and confirm our faith in the excellence of human reason, which, in the conflicts of its great men, profits by their errors as well as their victories,

'qui n'avance que sur des ruines, mais qui avance incessamment.'

As thought and action are the two most important manifestations of mind, the greatest men are philosophers and warriors; and as philosophy is the last and best form of humanity, and that which comprehends all the rest, its history is the completion of all history, the highest, the most comprehensive theme that can challenge and reward the labors of genius.

The idea of a universal history is recent, and even those histories which are called so, are restricted to a single department of human nature, as religion, law, or philosophy. The philosophical histories which have appeared in Germany, 'that land of classic lore,' though excellent as far as they go, represent only particular schools. Universal history, in Cousin's sense of it, has never been accomplished. It aims at nothing less than to seize the harmony of all things,—of nature, time and humanity. Such is the magnificent plan which this philosopher has conceived, and which he, if any one, seems able to fill up. Nothing can be foreign to his immense design; every department of physical or mental existence will supply its beam of truth to the torch which shall irradiate the path of history and consummate the science of mind. The eclectic principle is the polar star, which guides him in the vast career on which he has entered. He will examine every system and refer it to its true place, accept every truth and harmonize every contrariety. The two great schools, the sensual and the ideal, include every idea the mind can conceive,—and they have both been completely exhausted. Nothing can go beyond the sensualism of the school of Locke, the idealism of Kant and Fichte. The only remaining course,—as our author affirms,—unless the mind is destined to stop short in the nineteenth century, is, to reconcile and amalgamate the two, or rather the truths of each. Thus the eclectic philosophy is not only the best, the true, but the only possible philosophy.

Humanity is a grand topic. It is not an immovable picture, but a continued action of life and reality, whose periods and eras are all connected by the wisest relations, evolving the most beneficent effects. Nor is this all, for this immense development of created mind is but a single manifestation of that infinite and eternal mind, in whose essence all others are contained.

It must be acknowledged that the vastness, the optimism and the unity of this plan,—whatever may be thought of its practicability,—invest the subject with a sublimity and grandeur it has never before possessed, and raise the mind which contemplates it, in some measure, to the elevation of his, by whose genius it was conceived.

A point much insisted on by Cousin is the relation of cause, by which the difficulty of passing from the infinite to the finite is removed. There is no possible form of existence, which does not come under one or the other of these terms, which is not



either infinite or finite ; the difference between them is radical. How can that which is finite and varied, come from that which is infinite and one? How can unity generate variety, unless it first contain this variety in its essence, that is, unless it be not unity? But, says Cousin, causation is of the essence of the absolute, of necessity it creates. Creation involves two things, the creating cause and that which is created. This relation which unity has to variety, that is, the necessity of producing it, according to this philosopher, connects the dissimilar elements of the infinite and the finite, in a legitimate and intelligible manner. We are not keen enough to perceive the peculiar effect attributed to this explanation,—that of absolving unity from the supposed absurdity or impossibility of generating variety. Unity and plurality are abstractions of the mind, ideas essentially distinct and incompatible. To affirm that one of these abstractions is the other, that is, that unity is, or can become variety, is a contradiction. But when we affirm that the Deity has created the universe, or to speak metaphysically, that the infinite can produce the finite, we are not guilty of this absurdity, we advance an altogether different proposition, that is, that a being, possessing the attribute of infinity, can create finite natures. This proposition, though it demand proof, involves no contradiction ; but if it did, Cousin's explanation does not assist us, for that either assumes the very point in question, and affirms that unity does and must generate variety, or else defines unity to be not one, but two ideas,—unity and causation. The infinite is undoubtedly connected with the finite by the relation of cause ; but in admitting this, we must give up unity as synonymous with the infinite, that is, in the abstract sense of the term.

His reduction of all philosophical systems to two, is not destitute of foundation, but he carries the spirit of system too far,—a spirit of which, he himself says, '*rien n'est si impitoyable*,'—when he insists on ranging every philosopher in one or the other of these schools. The soundest minds have been those which have avoided a system, and cannot be said to belong exclusively to either school. Cousin admits, that although the sensual system of the continent was founded on Locke's philosophy, Locke himself did not go to that extreme, and it appears even from Cousin's view,—which is not altogether a fair one,—that all the principles derived by the sensual philosophers from Locke were truths, which, being incorporated with their errors, gave them currency.

The arrangement of all history into three epochs savors also too much of system. All the actual and possible forms of existence are reduced to three elementary ideas. Can any thing more be conceded, than that they may all be distributed into three classes? To class objects according to their most general character is not the same thing as to resolve them into their ultimate elements, and we conceive, that in this instance the two are confounded. But admitting that these three abstractions, the infinite, the finite, and their relation of cause, are the ultimate elements of thought, that there is no idea which is not compounded of these, and that the species exhibits only what belongs to the individual; still it is not without some aid from fancy, that the order established by Cousin is made out to prevail throughout all past and future history.

There is no idea more just in itself and more happily brought out by this able philosopher, than the eclectic principle,—that there is a portion of truth in every system which gives it currency, while it is the taking this portion for the whole, which is the source of error. The method he proposes of gathering up these scattered truths, is the true philosophical method, the only one which will, in the end,—although by slow degrees,—establish intellectual philosophy on immutable principles, or exorcise it out of that wizard circle of theory and system, in which it has been for ages spell-bound.

Notwithstanding, however, the excellence of this principle, the sublimity, extent and profoundness of his views, the splendor of his genius, which adorns no less than it illuminates every point to which it turns, there is in this writer a fondness for system and a disposition to generalize on insufficient grounds, which will bar his approach to perfection.

It is this power of generalization which distinguishes the philosophic from the vulgar mind, and to it we owe the benefits of science, yet it is one which needs to be exercised with caution. He who soars on the eagle's wing, should possess the keenness of his glance, and his faculty of unerring descent to earth, or else the ideas he gathers, though they may indicate this lofty flight, will have little value, applied to things below.

When we find a mind of such depth and comprehension as Cousin's, betrayed into the spirit of system and the subtilties of abstraction, we doubt if this is the age in which the science will be completed, and we venture to predict, that his is not the last metaphysical system which mankind are destined to receive.

But, although we cannot regard this system as the ultimatum of intellectual philosophy, yet is the science deeply indebted to Cousin, for the new light bestowed by his genius, and the attraction with which he has clothed a subject, often unjustly and ignorantly depreciated.

‘La philosophie,’ says Madame de Staël, ‘est la beauté de la pensée ; elle atteste la dignité de l’homme, qui peut s’occuper de l’éternel et de l’invisible, quoique tout ce qu’il y a de grossier dans sa nature l’en éloigne.’

We are not among the number of those, who regard the labors of the metaphysician,—even when unsuccessful,—as altogether wasted. The evils of a speculative and visionary mind are not those which it behoves us, in the present day, especially to guard against. The calculations of interest and the division of labor are every where chaining down men’s minds to a point, and we rejoice that there are spirits of higher range abroad, though their flight be in the clouds, whose call may rouse us to a sense of the grand features and broad principles of humanity.\*

#### ART. III.—*Life and Times of Richard Baxter.*

*The Life and Times of the Rev. Richard Baxter, with a Critical Examination of his Writings.* By REV. WILLIAM ORME, author of the *Life of JOHN OWEN, D. D.*, *Bibliotheca Biblica*, &c. In two volumes. Boston. Crocker and Brewster. 1831.

It is not our intention to enter into any extended examination of this work ; the general character of Baxter being, as we may suppose, already familiar to most of our readers. We shall only advert to a few leading features in the history of this eminent man, whose eventful life, and the noble principles by which it was actuated, might furnish copious subjects for reflection. Both these are exhibited by the author of the volumes before us, who has shown how well he was qualified for his task, by the fidelity and good judgment, with which he has executed

\* Having stated in a former article on the same subject,—N. A. R. vol. xxix. p. 67.—that we should probably resume it in a future No. it may be proper to add here, that the present article is by a different writer.